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 - Use justification to align text both to the right and left margins
 - Indent prose extracts (Ctl+M); add a blank line before and after
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An Assessment of Women's Rights in Islam: Lessons for Contemporary Marital Challenges in Lagos, Nigeria

*Paramole, Kabir Olawale, PhD
& Sanni, Mubarak Oluwadamilola*

Abstract

The concept of women's rights is one of the most discussed issues in contemporary times. This paper drew lessons from the concept of women's rights in Islam to cushioning contemporary marital challenges in Lagos State. It was a qualitative research work, based on primary and secondary sources of information and experiential evidences. The work found that marital challenges are commonly precipitated by denial and abuse of women's rights to work, freedom of expression and honour. The study brought to limelight the Islamic provisions on women's rights as viable mechanisms to solving contemporary marital challenges in Lagos State. The paper recommended gender equity and complementarity of spouses, striking a balance between work and home, and mutual discussion between spouses as solutions to marital challenges among Muslims in Lagos State. The paper concluded that honouring women's rights within the limit set by Islam, is the most sustainable way to lessen, to the barest minimum marital challenges in Lagos State.

Keywords: women, rights, Islam, marital, challenges, Lagos

Introduction

Marriage is a sacred contract held between spouses to make sexual intercourse lawful (Ayoub, 2008:1). However, marriages are not always free from challenges. These challenges are often occasioned by denial of certain inalienable rights of women, which have been poorly handled by the partners to the extent of deeply damaging their marriage relationships (Ogunsiji, 2014:24). There is no doubt that marital challenges and upheavals are ubiquitous and inevitable, cutting across socioeconomic strata. (Bammeke and Indongesit, 2018:1).

According to the National Bureau Statistics (cited in Vanguard, 2020), 0.2% of men and 0.3% of women are legally divorced, and well less than 1% of couples separated; yet such counts exclude the vast majority of Nigerians, whose traditional marriage ceremonies were not governed by modern laws (Vanguard, 2020). In any case, broken homes and divorces in the Nigerian so-

ciety, particularly Lagos state, pose great dangers to the development of the society (Adegoke, 2015:82).

The issue of women's rights has become a concern for human rights activists, academics and religious scholars, and this is because of the incessant and pervasive cases of domestic violence, extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, sexual harassments, trafficking and denials of rights to education (Abdulhamid, 2018:153), which are often associated with the abuse of women's rights.

The position of Islam on women's rights, in relation to marriage, is unambiguously documented in the primary sources of Islam - the Qur'ān and the *Ahaadith*. Chapter Four of the Qur'ān is named after women, and it considerably captures the status and rights of women in Islam. In spite of the unparalleled rights given to Muslim women, many of them still experience denials and abuses of these rights on a large scale. However, it may be a dichotomized denial and abuses of rights on the parts of both husbands and wives. Some husbands may want to claim superiority over their wives, and the other wives may want to insist on gender equality, and as such, unknowingly denying themselves their rights. These issues often lead to marital challenges in many homes.

It is within this purview that this paper assesses marital challenges in Lagos State, Nigeria, in consideration of the issue of women's rights in Islam in order to proffer solutions to these challenges. The objective is to bring awareness to this issue, and to see to it that the abuse or denial of women's right may be maximally decreased in Lagos State, particularly among Muslims.

The Concept of Women's Rights in Islam

It is no more news that, prior to the advent of Islam in Makkah, except for women of nobility (Adnan, 2004:24), women were preposterously derogated. Even during the Enlightenment period, the slogan "free and equal", did not apply to women, as their rights, unlike men, were limited to the areas of homes and children and family matters (Ellis and Esler, 2003:449). However, the coming and spread of Islam gradually uplifted the status of women and granted them their just rights.

In Islam, women are entitled to basic human rights conferred on every human being irrespective of gender or other considerations (Aliyu, 2010:9). This is premised on some Qur'ānic verses that men and women have equal status in the sight of Allah. For instance, in Qur'ān 3:195 Allah says, "...Never will I (Allah) allow to be lost the work of any of you - male or female. You are (members) one of another (you are equal to one another) ..."

Islam grants women the right to freedom of speech and expression, provided it is used for the propagation of good virtues and truth (Aliyu, 2010:16), including issues relating to their marital live. For instance, Khalwah bint Tha'alabah's complain to Prophet Muhammad about her inability to claim any support to provide for her children from her husband when he divorced her (Khaalid and Eliwa, 648), led to the revelation of Chapter 58 (*al-Mujadalah* - she who pleaded) of the Qur'ān, in which Allah heard her plea, and ordained that the concerned spouses could continue their marital relations after the husband had performed a prescribed expiration (Aliyu, 2010:18). This indicates that Islam appreciates women, and even makes a woman's expression the basis for legislation (Adnan, 2004:44).

Furthermore, Islam recognizes women's rights to earn money and own property. In Qur'ān 4:32, Allah says, "...To men are allotted what they earned, and to women what they earn..." Thus, Islam does not forbid women from seeking employment, provided such profession is not un-Islamic or unsuitable for her natural feminine disposition (Adegoke, 2009:212). The status of men as being manager of women as mentioned in Qur'ān 4:34 signifies that they are given that position because "they spend (to support them i.e. wives) from their means," and if not, they do not deserve the position of managers of women (Adnan, 2004:vii). This status does not signify superiority of men over women (Eniola, 2009:173); it is to ensure that women are well taken care of just like a manager of a company would always want his company to be well managed. Yet, as wives, women have financial rights to maintenance - feeding, clothing, shelter, and general care (Ayoub, 2008:52; Aliyu, 2010:45).

Also, Islam honours women and their rights to honour are well protected. This explains why the concept of *hijāb* tends to protect women's chastity and honour (Aliyu, 2010:16). Similarly, in protecting the honour of women, in Qur'ān 24:4, Allah establishes that those who slander women's chastity without due evidence should be treated as wicked transgressors, sinners and be punished with eighty stripes.

The list of rights that Islam gives to women is endless. The standard that Islam has set is that women's rights must not preclude them from performing their basic functions as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers, and must not be against their emotional and biological compositions. Women's rights are complementary to the rights of their male counterparts, and the intendment of Allah is not to subject the two genders to an unbridled competition with each other (Alao, 2014:52); and since it is a scientific fact that men and women have different biological compositions and temperaments (Hasan, 2004:7), women's rights must be respected with due consideration

to the natural difference between them and their men counterparts (Aliyu, 2010: 35).

Thus, Muslim women have the rights to be involved in educational, political, social and economic activities that do not dishonor and humiliate their femininity (Aliyu, 2010:101), and do not completely hinder them from carrying out their primary responsibilities as sisters, wives and mothers.

Islamic Human Rights as Tools for an Egalitarian Society

From its inception, Islam had established the concept of fundamental human rights in a bid to ensure equality and fairness for people of different races, colour, language, gender, as well as ideological freedom (Abdulhamid, 2018:154), which are to be observed and respected under all circumstances (Mawdudi, 1948:38) at all times and in all climes. Islamic human rights include: rights to life, property, human dignity, privacy, acquire education, security of personal freedom, security from arbitrary imprisonment, protect against tyranny, freedom of expression, conscience and conviction (Abdulhamid, 2018:157) and basic standard of life. There are several verses of the Qur'ān that categorically talk about each of the above-mentioned rights. For instance, as regards right to life and peaceful-living, Allah says in Qur'ān 17:33 thus:

You shall not kill any person, for Allah has made life sacred, except in the course of justice. And, if one is killed unjustly, then we give his heir authority to enforce justice. Thus, he shall not exceed the limits in avenging the murder, he will be helped.

As regards right to a good living, Qur'ān 51:19 stipulates that: "And in their wealth there is acknowledged right for the needy and destitute." This implies that anyone suffering of standard of living has a right in the property and wealth of the Muslims; irrespective of religion, gender, colour, race or even if they are from amongst their enemies (Mawdudi, 1948:38).

The Madinah Charter of 622 C.E. proves that, despite the differences between the Muslims and other religions adherents, the Prophet ensured the existence of social equality among all and sundry (Al-Mubarakpuri, 2015:172-180). In the Charter, not only were the Muslims' rights protected, but also, the fundamental rights of non-Muslims were safeguarded from all external and internal threats, tyrannies and persecutions (Doi, 1984:429).

Interestingly, women have an advantage of human rights to the extent that at warfront, they have the right to be protected (Doi, 1984:445), and generally, in all circumstances, their honours and chastity must be respected and

guided (Mawdudi, 1948:38). Unfortunately, the true status of women's rights is often not appreciated (Abdulhamid, 2018:154) by many people.

Feminism and Marriage Issues in Lagos State

In contemporary world, women's rights have been associated with legal issues pertaining to gender-discrimination and inequality, with its broader theory called feminism (Alao, 2014:52). Feminism is the philosophy that men and women should be politically, economically and socially equal (Henslin, 1999:292). As a form of sexist politics, it has come a long way from its humble beginning in the work of Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), which was meant to simply sensitise women to their rights as individuals (Ellis & Esler, 2003:450). It has now assumed different dimensions and ramifications, from the ultra-radical, neo-liberal brand, to the extent of extremity (Oloyede & Lawal 2012:267).

The feminists' idea that biology is not destiny, and so, stratification by gender is wrong and should be resisted (Henslin, 1999:292), is understandable, but the extent to which the supporters of radical strand of feminism call for hostility towards men (Henslin, 1992:293), to the extent of claiming that they do not need men to survive (Oloyede and Lawal, 2012:268) has continued to exact significant influences on marriages, in many parts of the world.

In a cursory survey carried out by the researchers in some parts of Lagos State, including Agege, Akowonjo-Egbeda, Ikeja, Iyana-Ipaja, Ikotun and Yaba, it is observed that some women find it unfair to stay back at home, do house chores, to take care of their children and look after their moral, educational and spiritual upbringings, while their husbands go out for occupational responsibilities. Quoting Noreen Bryne, as noted by Oloyede and Lawal (2012:268), "the feeling is why bother living with them (men) and wash their socks? ...A lot of women are deciding that they do not need men to survive." No wonder why as early as 5am and as late as 10pm one often finds women jostling for end means, in public places, in the streets of Lagos, at the detriment of their family responsibility and personal security, in the name of gender equality

Furthermore, the inclination of many women to feminism has made some of them remain unmarried, while some have remained single mothers. This often has a strong influence on women's marital journey (Qasim, 2020:65). The notion of "I cannot suffer in my father's house and again suffer with a man," (Qasim: 68), often make many women compete with men politically and economically, before or in their marital relationships. As a result of this, many men, whom naturally, would want their wives to be submissive, find it difficult to marry such women, hence they rather prefer to remain sin-

gle and make money before getting married (Qasim, 2020:72), than to hasten to marry women that would not be submissive to them because of their high educational or/and financial statuses.

It is in this connection that Qasim (2020:71-72) observes that:

In Alimosho local government area of Lagos State...some Muslim ladies were unable to get married as early as expected of them. They choose to pursue their education first to a first-degree level. This led to a problem that their prospective husbands should be graduates too, probably in a superior discipline or they should be of educated professional workers, who are doing well in their businesses..., because young ladies nowadays graduate early, they may wish to read further to Masters or PhD degrees... The number of men who can confidently marry these highly qualified people dwindles in proportion to their qualifications... This looks like a case of positioning themselves out of marriage...

This in our view is not an attempt to discourage women from pursuing educational qualifications and earning of money, for there are innumerable successful women like former deputy governors – Hajia Lateefah Okunnu, Alhaja Zinatu Aderoju Ojikutu and Dr. Idiat Oluranti Idowu-Adebule, Mrs Orelope Adefolure, etc., in the history of Lagos, who have contributed to the development of the State. Rather, the crux of the matter centers on the fact that feminist advocacy has made some women to be hugely inclined to competitive economic prosperity and public life at the detriment of their marital life. In fact, Mary Wollstonecraft who felt that women should be able to decide what is best in their own interests, and should not be completely dependent on their husbands, accepted that women's first duty is to be good mothers (Ellis and Asler, 2003:449-450).

Meanwhile, many women want to genuinely assist their husbands in the financial upkeep of the home. Simultaneously, they want to properly monitor their children to see that they grow up to be great leaders and builders of humanity. The problem then lies in how to manage both engagements. The inability to do this had led some women to become full house wives, with little or no contribution to the society, while many women have ventured out to work, neglecting their homes and leaving the children to be brought up by incompetent nannies and street urchins who do not have commendable education or good characters that can be impacted in them (Abbas, 2014:43).

Factors Responsible for Marital Disharmony in Lagos State

Researchers of religions and sociology have advanced many reasons on factors responsible for marital disharmony among people in Nigeria. However, a common cause of marital disharmony in Lagos State has been identified as wives' lateness in returning from work. This work observed that, many husbands complain about their wives coming home late from work and not preparing meals on time (Bammeke & Indongesit, 2018:5). It is in this circumstance that argument, leading to disharmony, often occurs in marital affairs. Nevertheless, in the words of Mr. Olashile Habeeb, a 33-year-old married man, with two children: "some men believe that in instances where their wives are hindered, due to the nature of their works or businesses, to take care of the children, prepare meals, do other home chores, couples need to have come to an understanding to a point where work would not significantly affect their homes". He said further, "I believe woman should get derivations/rewards from her knowledge/expertise be it monetarily or social capital. This helps to compliment the husband in meeting some of the demands of the home. For this reason, wife should earn/work to enable them have her financial independence. If the nature of the wife's work is challenging to her marital life, the couple should come to an understanding where work would not significantly affect the home."

Some men prevent their wives from working because of the tendency that their wives are going to join bad company or association. They feel that this may negatively influence their homes, and at the same time, become haughty to them, especially when they are financially buoyant. For instance, Mr. Abdurazaq Orimadegun, a 40-year-old, recounted that in the early years of his marriage, after he lost his job (2008/2009), his wife used to give him ₦200 every day, and this rendered him unable to control her whenever she misbehaved or came home late without convincing justification. He concluded that from what he had experienced, he cannot support women to work, and if he would, she must not earn more than him, because when a wife is wealthier and prosperous than the husband, she misbehaves and cannot be easily controlled when straying.

Also, Mr. Lawal Ismail, 39-year-old, asserted that:

My second wife hardly appreciates my little efforts for her because she is more financially secured; and I often get angry towards her because of this. But I cannot stop her from working because her earnings complement and assist my financial responsibilities.

One should however note that women who stay at home all day, long feel depressed as a result of redundancy, and this, in the words of Abbas (2014:43),

"...also affects women's marriages, because they end up feeling useless and unproductive, and take out their pent-up anger on their husbands when the latter return home from work in the evening."

We observed that, in some cases, it is the natures of the wives' works that make some husbands enter into disagreements with their wives. For example, Mrs. Aishat Ibrahim, 31-year-old, said that:

Being unable to secure a job with my B.Sc. certificate, I had to resort to the selling of polythene. But my husband did not like this, and thus, often frowns at me. It was during this COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, when my husband's salary was unpaid for about six months that he willingly accepted my business.

Other identifiable causes of marital disharmony include: lack of trust by the husband, arguing with husband, wife challenging husband's extramarital affairs, husband's jealousy, problem with in-laws, subversion of husbands' authority in terms of decision making (Bammeke and Indongesit, 2018:5-8). Lack of sexual intimacy and satisfaction also causes marital disharmony, as when marital partners fail to satisfy each other in a sexual encounter over a long period, problems ensue (Adesola, 371). Murtadha and Afolabi (2010:80), notes that:

Some husbands are keen to satisfy their own desires, and they hasten to do that without caring about their wives or paying attention to their right to pleasure, so their wives find no enjoyment in it, and it becomes a problem and a burden for them.

As regards subversion of husbands' authority as the head of the family, often, wives get scolded, beaten and abandoned for usurping the considered roles of their husbands in terms of decision making. (Bammeke & Indongesit, 2018:7).

From the above discussion, one would see that marriage disharmony are caused by various factors, of which in the case of our study, women's right to work and earn money, as well as the right to express themselves are two factors that usually bring about disharmony between spouses. Men find it difficult to allow their wives' opinion and decision override theirs, perhaps, because of the notion that the husband is the head of the house. Even when wives are only expressing their views, some husbands often misunderstand it. For instance, according to Mrs. Anisere Rihanat, 41-year-old, "misinterpretation of my advice and opinion is the only issue that affects the peaceful co-existence of my marriage." Yet, Alhaji Luqman Ajadi, 51-year-old, emphatically asserted that, "I am a dictator in my home because I am the head of the

family, and since I carry out all my responsibilities as a husband and a father, whatever I say, my wife must adhere to and abide by it." This explains why, in order to avoid any conflict, most women would not take decisions without consulting their husbands, especially on matters concerning their immediate family (Bammeke and Animashaun, 2018:3).

Contemporary Marital Challenges in Lagos: Women's Rights as Solutions

It has been argued that women's experience of violence in marriage is connected to the issue of women's rights (Bammeke and Indongesit, 2018:6). As earlier mentioned, abuses and denials of women's right that often lead to marital challenges include the issues of women's right to work and earn money, the right to expression, and right to honour. Since women, as wives, have rights to honour, work and earn money, and express themselves these rights need to be honoured and protected in order to achieve harmonious marital lives.

The pristine era of Islam is full of Muslim women who worked, earned money and owned properties. For instance, Khadijah Bint Khuwaylid, was a wealthy businesswoman before and after she married the Prophet, and this did not inhibit her from being a great example as a good wife, and mother, loving her husband and all what he desired (Eliwa and Khaalid, 2003:523).

Often, as we have seen in the narratives of some of the experiences and realities of our interviewees, the ability of women to work and earn money, helps and compliments the financial responsibilities of their husbands, especially when one considers the inability to meet up the financial expenses of many men, as well as the prevalence of job insecurity and financial instability ravaging our society.

Women's rights to freedom of speech and expression are also a vital right in facilitating and ensuring cordial marital relationship. In Islam, husband-wife relationship is governed by mutual understanding, cooperation and consultation over important issues (Eliwa and Khaalid, 2003:502). Islam does not prevent women from expressing their opinions on issues, be it marital relationship, economic or political affairs. Women's knowledge, rationality and wisdom must also be honoured in marital life.

For instance, in the day of Hudaibiya, after the Prophet concluded a truce with the Quraish and his companions were unwilling to slaughter their animals, as commanded by him, it was one of his wives, Ummu Salama, who told him, on getting home annoyed, that, "O Messenger of Allah, if you would like the Muslims do what you want, you would better go out and do not speak with any one until you slaughter your camel and have your hair

cut" (Eliwa and Khaalid, 2003:542). Then, the Prophet approved her opinion, and as soon as people saw the Prophet doing that, they started to slaughter their animals and cut the hair of one another. (Eliwa and Khaalid, 2003:542).

The wife in a Muslim family is a tremendous source of strength to the husband in facing the hardship of life while the husband in turn should always be the firm shield that protects the wife from the hazards of life, without them infringing upon their God-given inalienable rights. When the Prophet was scared and trembled, on receiving the first revelation, it was his wife, Khadijah that calmed him and assured him of Allah's protection (Eliwa and Khaalid, 2003:524).

Women's right to acquire education – formal or informal, is also a right that must be respected to facilitate smooth marital life. Although some studies indicate that educational attainment does not really make one completely free from marriage instability (Animashahun and Fatile, 2011:198), yet women's right to education must not be denied. Women's education helps not only in the upbringing of the children, the management and financial security of the home, but also has great influence on the education and the personality their children takes to the society (Adegoke, 2009:209).

For instance, it would be challenging for a wife that is not a literate to guide her children through their school home-works (assignments). This may consequently affect the children's educational background and moral upbringing. Even if the parents attempt to seek for a home tutor service, they may be financially incapacitated. Indeed, during the pristine time of Islam, women were scholars, and they were looked upon as vital custodians of knowledge, whose guidance, the male companions of the Prophets regarded (Philips, 2007:220).

Women's right to honour and dignity could also facilitate harmonious marital relationship. Mu'awiya ibn Haida relates that he once asked the Prophet:

O Messenger of Allah, what does one of us owe to his wife?" He said, "You should feed her when you eat and you should clothe yourself. Do not slap her, do not abuse her, and do not keep away from her except inside the house. (An-Nawawi, 2007:125)

Similarly, the Prophet said:

Beware, be advised (accept my advice, advise one another) to treat women in kindness. They are but like captives in your hands. Beyond that, they owe nothing to you, unless they commit a gross obvious sin...Beware, they owe you certain rights, and you owe them certain

rights... Beware, you owe them to treat them kindly (in providing for them) in their clothing and food. (An-Nawawi, 2007:125)

Women's right to honour also finds basis in the prohibition extramarital affairs, which is also a cause of marital disharmony. As said earlier, extramarital affairs of many men often cause marital disharmony, particularly when their wives felt dishonoured, cheated and insecure. It is known that in Qur'an 17:32, Allah unequivocally prohibits adultery, as it is an evil which opens road to many evils, inconsistent with self-respect and respect for others, and destroys the basis of the family (Yusuf, 1975:703).

Similarly, like men, women have the right to sexual intimacy and satisfaction. Husbands' inability to satisfy their wives' sexual needs may lead to disrespect towards them, adultery, or divorce (Murtadha and Afolabi, 2010:75). Thus, it is the wives' religious right that their husbands take reasonable and permissible means to fulfill their sexual desires (Murtadha and Afolabi, 2010:73), because part of living with them honourably is having sexual intimacy, which is obligatory upon the husbands, as much as is sufficient to satisfy them, so long as they do not harm themselves (Murtadha and Afolabi, 2010:78).

Although it seems right that women should remain silent and passive when being criticised or scolded by their husbands in issues they have rights upon, but in reality, sometimes, it is not, for it only leads to extremity, as women can keep their emotions bottled up for only so long before they burst out and fight back, attacking their husbands with all of the venom that their tongues can spew forth (Ash-Shahawi, 2008:148).

The solution to this is that women need to deal with the criticisms by first diagnosing their true feelings and the root of the criticism or argument, and then, express their feelings in a calm, straightforward and humble manner. With this, they are more likely to be able to find a common ground with their husbands, and agree on terms that will provide a lasting solution, and not just a temporary truce (Ash-Shahawi, 2008:148-149).

Generally, it is the denial of women's divine rights that often results into marital disharmonies and challenges, and if not managed well, it results into domestic violence, which could lead to divorce or even death of one or both spouses. Regarding women's guaranteed rights in Islam, Bashir (2014:35) rightly noted that:

The rules, regulation and verdicts concerning women in Islam are clear, frank and open. Islam capitalises on the complete care that should be given to the protection of a woman against anything that may harm her personally or cause-ill-fame to her reputation or character.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, we suggest the following:

Gender Equity and Complementarity of Spouses

It is instructive to note that in spite of the fact that they advocated women's rights and denounced women's oppression under patriarchy, Alice Walker's idea of womanism and Ogundipe-Leslie's postulation of *stiwanism*, suggest complementary equity and harmonisation of roles through which men and women can participate equitably in the urgent mission of social transformation and reconstruction (Oloyede and Lawal, 2012:228), a consequence of which would aid marriage relationship. Under the *Shari'ah*, distinct responsibilities and roles of man and woman follow natural law (Eniola, 2009: 173), which make them complement each other like two halves of a whole (Hasan, 2004: 7).

Striking a Balance between Work and Home

In trying to exercise their rights, there is a need for women to strike a balance between their homes and their works. Today, many professional jobs and home-based businesses could be done at home, at one's convenient time. This would allow wives and mothers to be more flexible with their schedule, to work it around their husbands' and children's schedules, and, thus, provide a better home environment for them. One clear thing is that as women grow older, the lesser they are burdened with children's care. In cases where women's work becomes unavoidable, there is no wrong in seeking for the service of a reliable and diligent maid, pending the time the wife becomes free. This, of course, is part of honouring her right and being kind to women, and in being kind to them one can actually help them in household related works (Ash-Shahāwi, 2008:31). Men should know that doing home chores is not the responsibility of their wives, but only a voluntary work and indication of good morality, which women use to amuse and serve their husbands (Ayoub, 2008:134-136).

Mutually Inclined and Accepted Discussion between Spouses

Honest discussion on the basis of love and affection could reveal issues each party has that can be resolved in reasonable mutually-acceptable ways; passivity and argument rarely work (Murtadha and Afolabi, 2010:73); rather, they often lead to marital disharmony. In respect of Qur'an30:21, spouses need to understand that one of the essences, and of course, the foundation of marriage is to find tranquility in one's partner, which is contrary to unrest and disorder befalling the body, soul, and sensibility ('Atta, 2012:29), and to

work together and assist each other to attain bliss (Ogunsiji, 2014:25), and women, as wives, are epitome of solace and tranquility (Bashir, 2014:35). An understanding of this will avail men to accept their wives' humble words of expression.

Availability of Marriage Councilor/Guardian or/and Religious Scholar/Cleric

Muslim clerics and scholars, as well as Muslim organizations and institutions should take responsibility in counseling couples on how to have a harmonious marriage relationship. This can be facilitated through regular periodic lectures on different electronic, social and physical platforms. In the same vein, one of the importance of the condition of guardians and upright witnesses, in validating a marriage, is to preserve the relationships among the family members (Al-Sheha, 2001:40), and guide the spouses towards ways to achieving marital bliss on the basis of their distinctive rights, because most marital problems stem out from ignorance of these rights (Murtadha and Afolabi, 2010:80).

Conclusion

The paper has been able to establish that women's rights to work, freedom of thought and expression, and honour are not always given due consideration in marital relationship, hence many marriages are often associated with discontent and disharmony. This paper has however shown that, as expected in an egalitarian society, the ability of women, as wives, to exercise their divine rights within the limits set by Islam, and the ability of men, as husbands, to honour and protect these rights, particularly in the context of the realities surrounding their socioeconomic survival in a society such as Lagos State, will go a long way in ensuring harmonious and blissful marital relationship.

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